

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LUSAKA 01795 251418Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----087861 251421Z /41

O R 251317Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5957
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 1795

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PDEV RH UK US
SUBJ: BRITISH PROPOSE CONSULTATIVE GROUP TRAVEL TO SALISBURY

1. I HAVE JUST RECEIVED A MESSAGE THROUGH THE BRITISH FROM GRAHAM PROPOSING THAT WE MEET IN JOHANNESBURG JULY 4 AND TRAVEL THE SAME DAY TO SALISBURY. WE WOULD CONDUCT TALKS IN SALISBURY THROUGH THE 6TH, RETURNING TO JOBURG AND LUSAKA THAT EVENING, IF POSSIBLE, BY U.S. MILITARY ATTACHE AIRCRAFT. THIS WOULD PERMIT US TO MEET THE FOLLOWING DAY WITH THE PATRIOTIC FRONT, INCLUDING NKOMO AND PERHAPS MUGABE IN LUSAKA. GRAHAM ASKED WHETHER THIS SCHEDULE WOULD BE CONVENIENT AND WHETHER I COULD OBTAIN USE OF THE ATTACHE AIRCRAFT. HE HAS ALREADY PROPOSED THE NEW SCHEDULE TO THE RHODESIANS.

2. I HAVE NO PROBLEM AS FAR AS CONVENIENCE IS CONCERNED AND ASSUME IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN USE OF THE AIRCRAFT. HOWEVER, I HAVE A MAJOR RESERVATION ABOUT THE PROPOSAL ON SUBSTANTIVE GROUNDS.

3. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, WE WERE TO RECEIVE THE PF'S FORMAL PROPOSALS ON A CONSTITUTION AND TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AT OUR MEETING IN LUSAKA ON JULY 7TH. I AM CONCERNED THAT IF
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 LUSAKA 01795 251418Z

WE TRAVEL TO SALISBURY BEFORE THAT, WE RUN A NUMBER OF RISKS. WE COULD NOT HELP BUT STIMULATE NKOMO'S SUSPICION OF OUR PURPOSE IN FURTHER TALKS WITH SMITH BEFORE WE KNOW WHAT THE PF'S POSITION IS. THE TRIP WOULD PROVIDE NKOMO WITH THE MEANS TO CRITICIZE THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP'S MOTIVES AND METHODS. THIS KIND OF CRITICISM WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY RUB OFF ON THE FRONTLINE. IT IS TRUE WE MADE NO COMMITMENT TO NKOMO THAT WE WOULD RECEIVE

HIS PROPOSAL BEFORE ENTERING INTO FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS. BUT BY FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE RHODESIANS BEFORE RECEIVING HIS PROPOSALS WE ARE DEMONSTRATING THAT NEGOTIATIONS CAN CONTINUE WITHOUT HAVING THE PF'S POSITION. NKOMO'S CONCERN THAT WE DO NOT REALLY MEAN TO TAKE HIM OR HIS ORGANIZATION SERIOUSLY WOULD BE REINFORCED.

4. OWEN EXPRESSED TO THE SECRETARY IN PARIS HIS VIEW ON THE URGENCY OF RAPID PROGRESS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. THE SECRETARY AGREED AND ENCOURAGED OWEN TO GO AHEAD. HE DID, HOWEVER, MAKE CLEAR THAT WE SHOULD PROCEED WITH ALL DELIBERATE SPEED. IN DECIDING WHETHER TO AGREE TO THE NEW SCHEDULE PROPOSED BY THE BRITISH, WE HAVE TO BALANCE THE NEED FOR MOVING AHEAD RAPIDLY WITH CAUTION AT NOT PROVIDING THE NATIONALISTS WITH A BASIS FOR FURTHER SUSPICION OR CRITICISM FOR WHICH THEY ARE UNFORTUNATELY ON THE LOOKOUT.

5. OWEN WANTS TO BE ABLE TO RETURN TO RHODESIA BY JULY 19 WITH HIS FINAL PROPOSALS. HE IS RIGHT THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO DO SO IF WE DO NOT COMPLETE OUR SALISBURY DISCUSSIONS UNTIL THE 10TH OR 11TH, PARTICULARLY IF BOTH U.S. AND UK APPROVAL IS NEEDED BEFORE PRESENTING IT. HE POINTS OUT THAT LITTLE CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED IN AUGUST IN EUROPE AND THAT WE CAN'T WAIT UNTIL SEPTEMBER. IF THE BRITISH WERE TO BE DISSUADED FROM GRAHAM'S PROPOSAL OF IMMEDIATE TRAVEL TO SALISBURY, IT WOULD TAKE THE SECRETARY'S INTERVENTION. THIS IS A VERY FINE JUDGMENT WHICH
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LUSAKA 01795 251418Z

THE DEPARTMENT WILL HAVE TO MAKE. MY OWN RECOMMENDATION WOULD BE TO PLACE GREATEST CONCERN ON THE NEED TO KEEP THE NATIONALISTS WITH US. THOUGH I RECOGNIZE THE NEED TO PROCEED RAPIDLY IT SEEMS TO US TO BE WORTH DELAYING OUR VISIT TO SALISBURY UNTIL WE RECEIVE THE PF'S PROPOSALS. OUR TRAVEL TO SALISBURY AFTER THIS WOULD BE ENTIRELY DEFENSIBLE AND MIGHT SERVE TO INCREASE NATIONALIST CONFIDENCE THAT WE ARE SEEKING A SETTLEMENT WHICH TAKES THEIR CONCERNS FULLY INTO ACCOUNT. IF THE NEED FOR SPEED IS AS GREAT AS OWEN BELIEVES, THEN PERHAPS WE SHOULD ABANDON COMPLETELY THE PROPOSED VISIT TO SALISBURY, RETURNING DIRECTLY TO LONDON FOR PREPARATION OF THE FINAL PACKAGE AFTER RECEIVING NKOMO'S PROPOSALS IN LUSAKA.

6. IF THE DEPARTMENT AGREES, LONDON MAY WISH TO DISCUSS THE ABOVE WITH GRAHAM. PLEASE INFORM ME WHETHER TO ACCEPT GRAHAM'S PROPOSAL. IF NOT, I BELIEVE THE SECRETARY SHOULD COMMUNICATE OUR RESERVATIONS TO OWEN IN THE FAIRLY STRONG TERMS WHICH WOULD BE NECESSARY IF WE ARE TO DISSUADE A BRITISH VISIT TO SALISBURY BEFORE RECEIVING THE PF'S PROPOSALS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PROPOSALS (BID), MEETINGS, NEGOTIATIONS, PEACE PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 25-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977LUSAKA01795
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770228-0338
Format: TEL
From: LUSAKA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770618/aaaaapro.tel
Line Count: 114
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 31d67e76-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2031720
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRITISH PROPOSE CONSULTATIVE GROUP TRAVEL TO SALISBURY
TAGS: PDEV, RH, UK, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/31d67e76-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009